The Report of the Accreditation Visiting Team

Lehi Junior High School

700 East Cedar Hollow Road Lehi, Utah 84043

February 5-6, 2003



Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Lehi Junior High School 700 East Cedar Hollow Road Lehi, Utah 84043

February 5-6, 2003

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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FOREWORD

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate inservice growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, February 5-6, 2003, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Lehi Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Kevin Cox is commended

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Lehi Junior High School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Lehi Junior High School.

Steven O. Laing, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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LEHI JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

A. Kevin CoxVallen L. Thomas	1
Bruce Gardner	1
Counseling	
Lynn Meek	Counselor
Kathleen Spencer	
Paula Peterson	Counselor
Ray Rawson	Counselor
Support Staff	
Support Stail	
Allen, Jacquelyn	Campus Aide
Adams, Rachel	
Atkinson, Cori	
Barnett, Ryan	
Bryson, Madge	
Burgess, Kevin	
Cowan, Jacqueline	
Croff, Janene	
Grant, Taylor	±
Gurney, Barbara	•
Hansen, Terilyn	
Heyn, Yolanda	
Holmes, Mary	
Marshall, Robert	
Nielson, Sandra	
Parker, Deborah	
Peterson, Barbara	
Peterson, Doug.	-
Peterson, Robyn	
Redmond, Sheila	
Rigby, Linda	
Rosenlof, Joyce	
Rutsch, Becky	Lunch Worker

Smith, Lynda C	Media Tech.
Smith, Marrilee	Lunch/Computer
Terry, Kylee	Para. Ed. Aide
Tingey, Linda	Lunch Manager
Trulock, Cori	Office Receptionist
Webb, Kenneth	Head Custodian

Faculty

Barratt, Lori	Science
Baugh, Matt	
Baxter, Jamie	
Bott, Joyce	
Busby, Sharon	, ,
Caldwell, John	*
Casper, Lindsay	
Chadwick, Nan.	
Corbett, Michael	
Crane, Jennifer	1
Fambrough, Fonita	
Ferkovich, Alan	
Goulding, Joan	P.E./Dance
Hagert, Reynold	Science
Hancock, Naomi	English
Hobson, Marlanne	History
Holbrook, Michelle	Special Education
Howell, Joan	Art
Hoyal, Harold	History
Hughes, Richard	Resource
Hutchinson, Laurie	Science
Ingersoll, Jamie	History/Reading
Innes, James	Resource
Jacobsen, Jennifer	Health/P.E.
Lake, Rochelle	Math
Lott, Sharrett	English
Macias, Lisa	Math
McArthur, Lisa	English
McCleskey, Susan	T.L.C.
McEwan, Margaret	English
McFerson, Albert	Social Studies/Student Council
McGeary, Tony	P.E.
McGlone, Jeff	History/Spanish
Mecham, Benjamen	Science
Moon, Jim	Media Spec.

Muirbrook, Glenna	Resource
Ostler, Traude	
Page, Carol Ann	±
Patten, Susan	
Payne, Marc	
Rasmussen, David	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,
Revoir, Moani	T.L.C.
Scott, Cam	Science
Shelley, Jocelyn	Health
Sorensen, Burke	Orchestra/Math
Streicher, Chris	Adaptive P.E.
Swiderski, Pete	Band
Taggart, Sally	English
Tassainer, Velyn	English
Taylor, Heather	Art
Tea, Lorraine	Choir
Teuscher, Bruce	Spanish/P.E.
Thayne, Clark	Math
Thomas, Jennifer	Resource
Ungricht, Margo	English
White, Sheri	Home Economics/Spanish
Willhite, Drusilla	Math
Wofford, Alan	Math/Spanish
Wood, MaryAnne	English/Reading
Wright, Douglas	History/Weight Training

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LEHI JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Through cooperative efforts, our students, parents, educators, and community are committed to

Leading
Inspiring
Valuing and
Empowering each individual to strive for the highest standards of excellence for a lifetime of success!

BELIEF STATEMENTS

The educational community of Lehi Jr. High School believes that:

- each member of the educational community has a critical responsibility to fill an essential role,
- building lifelong success is a result of instilling the responsibility and desire to learn to each individual,
- the Information Age in which we live requires complex thinking skills to solve current and future problems,
- effective communications skills are essential in order to work, play, and live successfully and to build positive relationships with those around us, and
- the future of each individual, our democracy, and our world depends upon building and practicing responsible citizenship, including civility, environmental awareness, and social conscience.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Steve Ramirez, Accreditation Consultant, Life Long Learning and Associates, Visiting Team Chairperson

Greg Proffit, Ecker Hill Middle School, Park City School District
Robert O' Conner, Treasure Mountain Middle School, Park City School District
Jodi Wihongi, Joel P. Jensen Middle School, Jordan School District
Renee Genereux, Judge Memorial High School, Diocese of Salt Lake City
Susan Sweet, Roy Junior High School, Weber School District

James Fenton, Olympus Junior High School, Granite School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

LEHI JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Lehi Junior High School is located in the Alpine School District, in Lehi, Utah. The school includes students in grades 7-9 and is experiencing rapid population growth. The school presently houses 1,565 students. The district is building a new junior high school that is expected to be to be completed next year. This will alleviate some of the overcrowding in the future, but in the meantime, staff, students, and community do a commendable job of educating their students in a very positive school climate.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

The school's profile focuses primarily on describing student growth at Lehi Jr. High (LJH) and the corresponding issues that accompany a rapid increase in community and school population. The data provided by the school shows a trend in increased truancy and unexcused absences. At the same time, the data also show a slight increase in test scores at the school.

The staff has identified a need to increase the relevance of the curriculum to real life. The "Programs and Instruction" survey indicated that the school's students saw little or no connection between the curricular program and their lives. The school has identified the need to be more explicit and strategic in teaching these connections.

The staff also identified (through the "Climate" survey) that students and parents feel generally good about the school and its ability to serve the children in the community.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

Lehi Jr. High is strongly encouraged to pursue the development of a data management system that will allow the staff to:

Support or Refute Hypotheses Regarding Students

Although the profile hypothesizes the negative impact of an increase in student population, there is very little disaggregated data to support this hypothesis. During the increase in student population, test scores on state and national tests actually rose. The question the school needs to pursue through data collection and analysis is, "How are new students doing in comparison to the students who

have been in the community for a number of years?" Without data to substantiate its intuitions, the school is liable to inadvertently engage in negative stereotyping.

Substantiate the Allocation of Resources for Improvement Efforts

Based on the concerns of the staff and administration, the school recently added a security guard to assist with student behavior. To ensure this decision was effective, the school might pose the following questions: (1) Initially, how many students were in need of additional supervision? (2) What students were in need of additional supervision—males, juniors, Hispanic students, or students new to the school? (3) Has the officer's presence helped reduce the number of incidents of negative behavior? (4) What types of negative behavior have been curtailed?

The Visiting Team does not question the effectiveness of the officer in working with the students at LJH. In fact, it is evident that the officer has had a positive impact on the climate of the school as a result of his rapport with students. The question remains as to whether or not having the officer on campus is also having a positive impact on student achievement. If he is having a positive impact, then how can the school maximize the talents of the officer by identifying and targeting students particularly in need of the school's assistance?

Identify Students in Need of Additional Support

The school needs to focus its analysis in the profile to identify those students who are achieving and those who are not. Additional data on classroom GPA and state and national test scores, as well as attendance, truancy, and referral data, is necessary to allow for a complete analysis of student trends. Each of these sources of data needs to be broken down (disaggregated) by grade level, gender, ethnicity, and length of time attending the school in order to reveal students in need of additional support.

Although student achievement data was limited in the initial report, the administration was very helpful in providing additional data requested by the Visiting Team. The Visiting Team strongly encourages the school and district to develop a comprehensive system for collecting, organizing, and disaggregating a wide variety of student data in the future.

Lastly, The school profile revealed that the school has a positive school climate. This fact was substantiated throughout the site visit by data and observations collected by the Visiting Team. As an extension of this finding, it is suggested that the school research the impact of school culture on climate and its direct connection to student self-esteem and student achievement.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- In the profile, it was suggested that a possible reason for the increase in test scores may have been the implementation of the 7th grade reading program. Though data was not available at the time of the report, it is suggested that the school collect and analyze future test data to determine the impact of the reading program.
- The school indicates an emphasis on staff development in math instructional strategies. Again, data on the impact of this staff development program on student achievement would be essential to determine whether to continue this focus for staff development or not.
- The profile states, "Much of the recent growth comes from families trying to remove their children from more violent areas of the state. Fortunately, we have avoided a significant number of problems related to gangs, even though we do have diverse groups." Who are these groups? Is it possible that the reason for few gang-related issues is that the students didn't, and don't, belong to gangs? It is suggested that the school collect data on the student population to better understand its student body and avoid the negative ramifications created by stereotyping groups of students.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

The report indicates that the self-study is an evolution of work begun during the time of the Centennial Schools initiative. As the school became aware of the changes in the accreditation process, adaptations were made. These adaptations include seeking greater input from parent groups and other stakeholders.

Because of a lack of understanding of the new accreditation process on the part of the staff, many opportunities for stakeholder participation were missed. The school visit provided an opportunity for the staff and community to be educated as to the advantages and opportunities for stakeholder participation in the process.

The staff participated in a very extensive process and is committed to the identified action plans from the self-selected focus groups. With a more thorough understanding of the process, the staff would have been able to harness this energy and commitment to initiate data-driven action plans that came from a whole school effort.

The staff was very appreciative of the visit, which helped them to clarify and refocus their efforts. They received hard feedback in the spirit of a "critical friend" process. It is the belief of the Visiting Team that the staff fully intends to

use the report to drive its work in future school improvement efforts.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The staff has created a very positive school climate despite the rapid growth in student population and a lack of facilities. Students and parents indicate that the school's students are safe and receiving a good education.

The staff also recognizes this strength, and values new teachers coming to the school as a result of population growth. They have put in place a very effective mentoring program to nurture and protect new teachers from being unreasonably overwhelmed in their first few years on the job.

The staff has identified several potential areas of growth for the school to pursue. There is a lack of data to support some of these initiatives, and the connection to student achievement needs to be made.

The Visiting Team has provided clarification of the importance of following the new accreditation process. The staff realizes that it needs to assess the systemic strengths and limitations of the school by using the NSSE rubrics for organizational effectiveness. The NSSE rubrics will also provide a purpose and direction for the focus groups.

The staff has been very open to suggestions and quick to note the advantages of the new accreditation process in identifying their strengths and weaknesses as an organization.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Lehi Junior High School is in the process of developing schoolwide desired results for student learning (DRSLs). Individual departments have established their own sets of DRSLs.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?

A collaborative process is evident in the development of the school's mission, beliefs, and desired results for student achievement. This work was accomplished through the formation of School Improvement Focus Groups. The collaborative process established eight separate focus groups that ultimately developed a plan for school improvement. Representatives from the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) served on four of the Focus Groups.

Increased community involvement should be considered during future revisions and continued development of the school's vision. The belief statements have continued to be revised through tremendous student and community growth. Student needs, various changes in leadership, and new teachers have all played a role in the formation of the school's belief statements and current school goals.

The purpose and direction for Lehi Junior High appears to come more from the work of the Focus Groups than from its belief statements or the school's mission. The school is encouraged to revisit the function of an organizational mission, beliefs, and DRSLs in order to align these principles and use them to drive the organizational decisions and future improvement efforts. The school's leadership is may want to consider seeking assistance from any of the state's facilitators in clarifying these ideas for the school and staff.

- b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?
 - The school's mission and belief statements address student roles in the community and as citizens in the future. Skill acquisition and development are also addressed. The areas of student achievement and academics are in need of supporting data and strategies for improvement.
- c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?

Each department has established its own set of DRSLs. There are commonalities among the departments' DRSLs. Integrating the departments' DRSLs into a single set of schoolwide desired results would help to strengthen the school's beliefs and mission, along with providing a common direction for school improvement.

Curriculum Development:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The Visiting Team found evidence that Lehi Junior High teachers, particularly in the Mathematics, Science, and English Departments, utilize the Utah Core Curriculum when planning instruction. There are commendable efforts within these departments to create time to work collaboratively to identify and solve curriculum issues. For example, the Math Department has identified program adoption, student placement, and course sequence issues surrounding Glencoe/Connected Math and 7th Grade Math/Pre-Algebra. They have met at the building level and with elementary and high school teachers to examine the problem. Also, English teachers reported meeting on an ongoing basis during lunch, or before and after school. Finally, although Utah Life Skills posters are displayed in many LJH classrooms, the Visiting Team did not find any evidence to indicate whether or not Utah Life Skills are used when planning units of instruction.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

Initial positive steps (e.g., the Utah Life Skills and the school's departmental listing of DRSLs) have been taken toward identifying the school's desired results for student learning. There is a good degree of correlation between the departments' desired results and the USOE Life Skills. The Visiting Team's conversations with staff confirmed that Focus Groups met regularly; however, the DRSLs did not seem to be a primary topic of the Focus Group meetings. Departments have identified desired results for student learning, but there does not seem to be calendar of regularly scheduled meetings to provide teachers with a forum for incorporating these overarching student learning goals into their day-to-day curriculum and instruction. No evidence was found to indicate that formal grade level or interdisciplinary teams are in place to support schoolwide teaching and/or assessment of the school's DRSLs. Students indicated that they did see some connection between their studies in separate subject areas, but these connections were not overtly emphasized by the classroom teachers.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

During the two-day visit, the following instructional practices and learning experiences were observed:

- Use of OHP, bulletin boards, and white boards to present problems, assignments, rubrics, and key ideas
- Resume writing with individualized coaching from teacher
- Students completing textbook exercises

- Direct instruction with questions/answers
- Simulation games in the teaching decision-making process
- Quickwrite persuasive essay writing on issues relevant to LJH student life
- Lab work in TLC and science classes
- Teacher modeling, with explanation of purpose and specific feedback
- Use of mnemonics

Other teaching strategies/learning activities discussed by faculty members interviewed by the Visiting Team included field trips, skits, current events presentations by students, and cooperative learning. The Visiting Team learned that during staff development days, teachers present strategies that work. The Visiting Team also noted that teachers in particular departments (e.g., math, science and language arts) share instructional strategies and align those strategies with departmental goals. Within their department, for example, the Language Arts teachers utilize the Six Traits Writing process and reading logs. The Math Department is beginning training in and discussion of Connected Math. The Visiting Team encourages this discussion, consistency, and collaboration within and among departments.

With few exceptions, students were engaged in classroom activities and reported that they enjoy their classes and like their teachers. In random interviews with students, the Visiting Team learned that students appreciate teachers who use strategies such as demonstrations, storytelling, and building on prior student knowledge in the classroom setting. Parents concur that teachers are proactive in addressing student learning problems early on and offering assistance. Parents are also pleased that teachers across departments have taught seventh grade students in how to use a textbook.

The Visiting Team recommends that the faculty analyze its assessment data and practices, and make connections between that data and current teaching strategies and learning activities. This will lead to the development of teaching practices for an optimal student learning environment and improved student achievement. Likewise, aligning teaching and assessment with the DRSLs will help faculty members develop strategies for the development of critical thinking skills, collaboration, and effective communication. Administrators and teachers may want to use the rubrics for Quality Instructional Design outlined in the NSSE booklet entitled *A Survey of Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness* as a tool to help the school identify the strengths and limitations of the effectiveness of its instructional practices. The Visiting Team encourages teachers within and across departments to continue to incorporate best practices (e.g., cooperative learning, project-based learning) in order to develop higher-order thinking, collaboration, and an overall increase in student achievement.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

Attention to different learning styles is evident in some departments and classrooms in the school in the displays of student work and performance assessments (e.g., the science posters, performing arts and visual arts projects). In conversations with individual teachers and with department chairpersons, the Visiting Team learned that some teachers are intentionally teaching students Howard Gardner's *Seven Learning Styles* and using them in instructional strategies and assessments (e.g., including projects such as the creation of visual advertisements as a history project and encouraging the utilization of visual arts in projects across departments).

The Visiting Team encourages the administration, guidance counselors, and teachers to carefully analyze and use assessment data to drive discussion of, staff development in, and implementation of instructional strategies and learning activities that will best support the learning achievement of **all** Lehi Junior High School students.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

The self-study document and teaching staff described school programs in place that serve as support systems for student learning. These include the Reading Comprehensive skills training, 6-Pack, Homework Center, Lehi Literacy Center, Peer Tutoring, Reality Town, Night of Excellence, and the Education Fair. In addition, a number of teachers, parents, and students acknowledged faculty availability to help students before and after school. An incipient ELL program is in place for a few students, and the school is proactive in hiring Language Arts teachers with ELL endorsements. As the school experiences a growth in the number of second language learners, the Visiting Team recommends that staff development in instructional strategies for inclusion of these students be extended to all staff members.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

Classroom observations and teacher interviews indicate that individual teachers are creating various assessments in order to assess their own classroom expectations. A wide variety of assessment tools have been observed. The level at which achievement expectations are articulated seems to vary with the individual teacher. Parent and student representatives indicate that student achievement expectations are generally clearly presented. There is little evidence of schoolwide or departmental standards governing the development of classroom assessment tools, other than making state Core Curricula the guide for expected content mastery.

Lehi Junior High School uses the SAT 9 and the state CRT tests for schoolwide assessment. A possible question here would be: How is the data from school-wide testing used in the development of student achievement goals—either for the school as a whole or for individual classes and subjects?

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

There are many indications that the assessments being applied in most classrooms consistently utilize methods based on the type of learning to be assessed, along with given performance standards. Examples include lab performance in science classes, product quality for a graphic design aspect in a technology class, and speed development charts in keyboarding, among many others. Observation and discussion with teachers indicate that traditional paper- and-pen testing is only a part of most classroom assessment practices. The only systematic determination of common assessment methods noted was when the curriculum was statedesigned (i.e., TLC) or district-emphasized (i.e., Connected Mathematics).

It is unclear whether or not SAT 9 and, especially, CRT results are being utilized by the school for their intended purpose, as tools to give direction to instructional improvement. Possible questions to be answered include: Does the school track data regarding the number of students not achieving core mastery levels? Does the school disaggregate testing data to help assess the needs of specific subpopulations – Special Education, ethnic minorities, ELL, and so forth? Has the school examined the correlation between classroom grading practices and mastery on core tests?

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

Brief discussions with parent and student representative groups seem to support observed and anecdotal evidence that teachers are generally fair in their assessment and grading practices. Again, there are no clear schoolwide or departmental policies or guides regarding the development of assessment practices, and therefore no recognized system for eliminating bias or distortion from testing conditions and assessment design. The disaggregation of past and current testing and grading data may give a better indication regarding questions of equity, allowing the school to see whether there are any population sub-groups not performing well under present practices.

Leadership for School Improvement:

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

The administration has done a commendable job of creating an environment of support and direction for the staff and students at the school. They have provided a sense of purpose around student learning. The staff is provided with every possible resource to keep their focus on student achievement. The administration, with the support of the district, has met the challenge of population growth and continued to provide a positive school climate with a "can do" attitude.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

The school is under new leadership as of a year ago. The accreditation process began under the previous principal and was inherited by the new principal. The lack of data and limited use of research-based continuous improvement processes were immediately recognized by the new leadership. The decision was made to make essential but minimal adjustments to the self-study and allow the accreditation visit to be a staff development experience for the staff. Any attempt to perform a major overhaul could possibly have diffused the sincere effort of the staff to do what was perceived to be the accreditation process. The staff and administration were very open to the staff development idea, and the decision to move forward despite the recognized shortcomings was courageous and effective on the part of the new leadership.

The staff is very collaborative and, given a task they believe would be beneficial to students and community, they pull together with enthusiasm to accomplish it. Although their efforts to establish focus groups were off the mark, they put forth a sincere effort.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

Presently, the monitoring of student achievement and instructional effectiveness are handled through departments. The leadership is aware that a comprehensive, schoolwide assessment system would be more effective, and they intend to use the accreditation report as a beginning for this work. The staff has learned that the DRSLs required by the accreditation process can be the impetus for this work. The staff recognizes that they also need to collectively examine their students' work to determine progress toward student achievement targets.

d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

The school leadership, along with the staff, excels in the area of managing limited resources to accomplish their goals. Students and parents commented on the appreciation they have for the entire staff (certificated and classified) for creating a safe and efficient school environment.

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

The leadership is very effective at using limited resources to focus on school-wide student achievement. The concept of a schoolwide focus on desired results for student learning was part of the staff development delivered by the Visiting Team. The staff now realizes that the DRSLs can provide a unifying set of achievement targets for all students and staff. They also realized the opportunity to expand their stakeholder base by asking students and parents to participate in the selection of the DRSLs. By developing an assessment system for the DRSLs, the various departments have purpose in collectively developing common assessments and a reason to reflect together to examine student work. The integration of the DRSLs into the curriculum content can help make the connections to real life that students indicated in the profile survey were lacking from their classes.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

The leadership team empowers the staff and community to participate in decisions that affect their respective interests. Teacher and parent committees are provided with encouragement and financial support from the administrative team. The leadership team participates in all committee activities and leads by example.

Although the school leadership empowers the school community and encourages commitment, participation, and collaboration, the community needs to sharpen the focus of the actions taken by concentrating on those activities that will improve student learning and achievement of the school's DRSLs.

Community Building:

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

The Visiting Team was impressed with the positive and productive relationship that exists among the staff. There is strong evidence that the school is creating and sustaining a learning environment for students. There is also a feeling of

caring and an effort to make all students feel they belong. The Visiting Team asked the staff to continue to make an effort to collaborate across departments to provide cross-curricular connections for students.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

The school actively engages parents in the learning process through a variety of programs: PTSA, Angels Among Us, the education fair, plays, newsletters, web sties, school newspapers, focus groups, and community council. Evidence indicates there is a strong effort to extend the school community. The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue its efforts in this area.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

The staff is actively involved in staff development based on their perceived needs and interests. A School Leadership Team has been organized to plan activities for four designated professional development days throughout the school year. In response to input from faculty, formal inservice has been offered in the areas of reading, classroom management, web site access, and teaming. In addition, some departments meet together to collaborate on curriculum and instruction.

The Lehi Junior High Associates Program offers teachers an opportunity to read assigned professional literature and meet together four times a year at a local restaurant to discuss educational issues and professional topics. Participation in this program is voluntary. Two groups of 10-15 teachers are currently involved. Dinner and reading material are provided by the district.

The New Teacher Academy was developed in response to high teacher turnover at Lehi Junior High School. A veteran teacher has been assigned one period each day to mentor first- and second-year teachers in areas ranging from classroom planning and curriculum design to the use of Power School and student tracking. In addition, all new teachers are given the opportunity to be out of the classroom for two and one-half days during the school year to dialogue with each other, with the mentor, and the administration.

It is suggested that staff development efforts become an outgrowth of the data that will be used to develop DRSLs and school improvement plans. Because of limited time and resources, it is also important that data be gathered and reviewed to determine the impact of inservice activities on student achievement.

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

There is a high level of support by the staff and parents for the administrative team at Lehi Junior High School. There appears to be a strong desire on the part of the staff to do what is best for students and work to make improvements to the school environment. All teachers participated on one of eight Focus Groups designed to identify needs and plan for school improvements. Parents also indicate a high degree of confidence in the school leadership team and acknowledge their opportunity, through an active PTSA and a newly organized community council, for input in planning and goal setting.

The staff and administration acknowledge the need to use more data-driven and research-based information to dictate the school's direction and to assess the impact of actions taken.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (NASCU) STANDARDS I-X

As most junior high and middle schools are not members of the NASCU, these standards are not addressed.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS—ACTION PLAN

- a) To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?
 - The original action plan submitted in the self-study was developed as a part of the yearly school improvement process for the state. There was little connection with the findings in the profile and the action plan. Each of the self-selected focus groups also had individual action plans. Again, these plans were not data-driven, but self-selected by faculty, who, although well-meaning, had little data to support their actions, and did not gather data to review the impact of their actions. The staff is well aware that they need to tighten the alignment between the action plan, the profile, the school's mission and beliefs, and departmental reports.
- b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide?

There was no question in the minds of the Visiting Team that the faculty is committed to developing a tightly aligned action plan based on data and focused on student learning. The staff development conducted during the visit clarified the task for the school and was very well received by the entire staff and community.

c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?

The school, as part of the recommendations, realizes that an interim visit on the part of the state (3-year visit) will include a review of the action plan to evaluate the alignment of the plan, and to monitor the school's progress toward its stated goals. This will include how well the school has established benchmarks for each of its action items.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The staff is to be commended for their efforts to create a highly positive culture of collaboration among students, teachers, and the community. This positive environment has been established despite rapid student population growth, limited physical space, and limited designated time for teachers to meet. This effort has created a climate of respect and trust that allows the staff to implement action plans to help them continuously improve on behalf of students. The Alpine School District is to be commended for providing the resources for staff to meet the physical plant necessary to cope with rapid growth.
- The staff is to be commended for their awareness and alignment with state standards and assessments. There is evidence that teachers have carefully selected resource materials (textbooks and supplemental audiovisual) that focus on curriculum and instruction according to the state standards, as well as course content. A variety of instructional practices were being implemented consciously to meet the needs of the different learning styles of students.
- The leadership of the school is to be commended for providing resources and a vision for the continuous improvement of the school community. The Visiting Team has every confidence that the leadership and staff will use the accreditation report as a learning process and respond positively to the recommendations of the committee.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff examine and disaggregate student assessment data to prioritize action plans for focus groups, professional development, school improvement plans, accreditation reports, and any other related school improvement efforts. The Visiting Team further recommends that the school prioritize its actions based on impact on student learning, and that the results of those actions be measured and the new data used to develop the next action plan.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff review the purpose of the focus groups in the accreditation process. The staff should look for common elements in the existing focus groups and those suggested by the NSSE rubrics that are part of the accreditation process. Reconstituting the focus groups in their intended format will give direction to the existing focus groups and continue the positive energy created by the focus group process that was begun three years ago.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff study the intended purpose of the desired results for student learning. Although each of the departments has created a list of DRSLs for themselves, they tend to focus on content curriculum outcomes, not on what all students should know and be able to do across the curriculum. The development of a common set of DRSLs and an assessment system for them would unify the staff and provide additional opportunities for collaboration and integration.